

**Iraqi school children near Karmah rush members of 5th Civil Affairs Group, there to inspect renovations of their elementary school for which CAG had contracted.**







**I**n addition to operating the Civil-Military Operation Centers in Iraq, the Civil Affairs Groups (CAG) also operate small tactical six-man teams. This is where the rubber meets the road. It is their job to continually travel throughout the area of operations, usually in a convoy with at most four vehicles, to assess and meet the needs of the local population. Some of their projects include school and police station renovations, repair and upgrade of the water and sewer infrastructure, rubble removal, medical waste clean up, soccer field construction, and facilitation of local Iraqi government operations.

After accompanying Team 3, Detachment 2, 5th CAG, on several of their missions in Saqlawiyah and Fallujah in 2005, I asked Major Christopher E. Phelps, the team officer-in-charge, to discuss his thoughts about their mission, both positive and negative. While he did note some frustrations, the positives far outweighed these and are best illustrated in his own words: “I wake up every morning...[and] can’t wait to get out there and do good things, make assessments, figure out what we’ve got to do, what do we have to problem solve today, how can we draw on the expertise of the Marines on my team...and I go to bed every night thinking...I can’t wait to get up tomorrow and go to work because I love what I do; this job, out of the 17 years I’ve



been in the Marine Corps, is by far the most frustrating job I've ever had...but it's by far the most rewarding job I've ever had."



*Above:* Maj Christopher E. Phelps spends time with an Iraqi toddler in Saqlawiyah.

*Facing:* An Iraqi boy approaches a CAG team near Karmah.

*"An  
appreciation  
for  
the  
people"*

Maj Charles R. Risio, 5th CAG team leader, describing what he will take with him when he departs Iraq



*“I don’t know if I’m ready to sign up again, having been deployed two times in two years and having four boys under the age of seven at home...I’m missing a lot of their lives but it’s worth it...I do what I do partly because of them.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps  
Officer-in-Charge, Team 3, Detachment 2, 5th CAG















*Left, Above, and following two pages:* Marines with Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG encounter Iraqi shepherds, children, while inspecting a local water pump in need of repair near Karmah.

















*Above and Facing:* Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG members inspect school renovations on the outskirts of Karmah.